

NSCN Complaints Committee Terms of Reference



In accordance with the requirements of the *Nursing Act*, S.N.S. 2019, c.8, and the bylaws made thereunder, the NSCN Board shall appoint a Complaints Committee composed of:

- At least one (1) public representative;
- At least one (1) registrant from each designation regulated by the College; and
- Such other number of registrants and public representatives as the Board determines.

Committee Membership*

- Committee composition will be based on the pool of members for the First Instance Committees¹ which will consist of at least eighteen (18) members, including a minimum of:
 - Five (5) licensed practical nurses;
 - Six (6) registered nurses;
 - Three (3) nurse practitioners; and
 - Four (4) public representatives.
- The Board shall appoint a Chair and a Vice Chair of the Complaints Committee, and may appoint a second Vice Chair.

Panel Membership

Upon receipt of a referral or a request for review of a complaint, the Chair will appoint a panel of at least three (3) Committee members to act as the Complaints Committee, including at least:

- One (1) public representative;
- One (1) registrant with the same designation as the designation of the respondent; and
- One (1) other person as determined by the Chair.

Exception to Committee and Panel Membership Requirements

Effective December 1, 2025, the Committee and Panel membership requirements in these Terms of Reference are subject to the following exception:

- Any requirement that a committee or panel include a registrant with a specific designation (including without limitation a registrant who holds the same designation as

¹ First Instance committees include the Registration and Licensing Committee, Complaints Committee, Fitness to Practise Committee, and Practice Review Committee.

a respondent or that sought by an applicant) does not apply to a designation that has 50 or fewer registrants.

Term of Office

Committee members hold office for one (1), two (2) or three (3) year terms as directed by the Board, and are eligible for reappointment.

Where a proceeding is commenced before a panel of the Complaints Committee and the term of office of a member sitting on the Committee expires, that member may remain part of the panel until the proceeding is concluded.

Registrant members who have a complaint filed against them shall recuse their membership on the Committee unless the Chair determines otherwise.

Quorum

Pursuant to the *Nursing Act*, a quorum of the panel shall consist of two (2) Committee members, including at least one public representative.

All decisions require the vote of the majority of the panel.

Mandate

The Complaints Committee is established by the *Nursing Act* to exercise the powers and functions as provided for in the Act, Regulations and By-laws, including without limitation the following activities:

- Consider complaints and other matters referred to the Committee and take such steps as the Committee considers appropriate within the scope of the authority granted to it in the Act, Regulations, By-laws and policies, including:
 - Dispose of complaints and other matters referred to the Committee within the scope of the authority granted to it in the Act, Regulations, By-laws and policies.
 - Where needed in the performance of its duties, exercise the powers, privileges and immunities of a commissioner under the *Public Inquiries Act*, except the powers of contempt, arrest and imprisonment
 - Consider whether a matter should be referred to the Fitness to Practice process
 - Upon request from the CEO, provide direction regarding an investigation.
 - Upon request from the complainant, review the decision by the CEO to dismiss a complaint, and confirm or overturn the dismissal of some or all of the complaint.
 - Consider a proposed Settlement Agreement referred by the CEO and:
 - recommend acceptance of the proposed Settlement Agreement,
 - recommend changes to the proposed Settlement Agreement, or
 - reject the proposed Settlement Agreement.

- Where permitted by the Act, Regulations or By-laws, consider whether to impose an interim suspension of a nurse's licence or ability to obtain a licence, or conditions or restrictions on a nurse's licence.
- Issue a written decision where required by the Act, Regulations or By-laws, and direct its distribution as required or permitted by the Act, Regulations or By-laws.
- Where a registrant has not paid a fine for engaging in practice without a valid licence and the matter is referred by the CEO, determine whether to direct the CEO to suspend the registrant's licence or ability to obtain a licence, together with any reinstatement fee ordered by the Committee.

In addition the Committee Chair, or Vice Chair acting as chair in the absence of the Chair,:

- Directs the selection of a panel of committee members.
- Acts as Chair of the panel, or where the Chair does not sit on the panel, directs the appointment of one of the panel members to serve as Chair.

The Chair of the panel is responsible for chairing meetings of the panel, and ensuring any required decisions are complete, and include sufficient reasons.

Criteria for Membership

- Committee members will demonstrate the values, attributes, knowledge, and skills outlined in the *NSCN Competency Profile for Regulatory Committee Members* (Appendix "A").
- No committee member may be a member of the NSCN Board or an employee of NSCN.

**Additional Criteria for Registrant Members*:*

- A registrant must hold a licence at the time of initial appointment to the Committee (the time they are first appointed to the Committee, not including any reappointments).
- Registrants whose licences expire while serving on the Committee, who do not renew those licences, remain eligible to serve on the Committee until the expiry of their term.
- Such registrants may be eligible for reappointment if the overall composition of the Committee ensures sufficient numbers of licensed registrants are available to meet the requirements of the By-laws.
- Generally, a registrant who has not held a licence for a period of five years, will not be eligible for reappointment.

Additional Skills for Chair and Vice Chairs:

- **Committee Leadership:** Understanding of and experience in facilitating meetings, developing a positive culture, conflict resolution, building consensus and fostering effective decision making.

- **Trauma and Culturally Sensitive Decision-Making:** Understanding and sensitivity to the effects of stress or potential stress on individuals involved in regulatory processes and ability to create safe spaces and trust-building processes that are also culturally sensitive.

Approved: June 5, 2019
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Appendix “A”

NSCN Competency Profile for Regulatory Committee Members

Committee Members – Registrants and Public Representatives

In order to support strong decision-making in the public interest, every committee member will demonstrate the following values and attributes:

- i. **Commitment to engage with role:** Willingness to learn and ability to devote time to committee meetings
- ii. **Information analysis and judgement:** Be able to review large amounts of written material within set timelines and use the information to analyze and support good decision making
- iii. **Integrity:** Being honest, trustworthy, and open about your opinions
- iv. **Collaboration:** Ability to work effectively with others
- v. **Commitment to fostering inclusivity:** Working towards an environment in which everyone feels valued, can fully participate and is treated with respect and dignity
- vi. **Objectivity:** Making justifiable decisions based on evidence and good information to best fulfill the committee’s public interest mandate
- vii. **Communication:** Have strong interpersonal communication skills, including the ability to articulate a perspective and engage in respectful, productive, and sometimes difficult discussions.

Every committee member will either demonstrate, or be willing to learn, the following knowledge and skills:

- i. **Health Professions Regulation:** Understanding of the role and philosophy of health profession regulators, the public protection mandate of NSCN, the applicable legislation, regulations, bylaws and policies, and the core work of NSCN and its committees
- ii. **Confidentiality:** Understanding of the need to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information reviewed by the committee
- iii. **Cultural Safety and Humility:** Understanding and practice of ongoing learning, appreciation, and respect for unique perspectives, cultural contexts, power imbalances and biases in deliberation and decision-making
- iv. **Procedural Fairness:** Understanding of administrative law principles, and using consistent and sound judgement to make decisions in accordance with procedural fairness principles
- v. **Conflicts of interest:** Understanding and ability to identify conflicts of interest

In order to reflect the communities that NSCN serves, and the context within which those communities receive healthcare, all committee members will be asked (not required) to identify whether they bring any of the following diverse background and perspectives:

- i. **Indigenous Identity:** First Nations, Inuk/Inuit, Métis, Mi'kmaq, Other Nationhood
- ii. **Cultural Diversity:** A variety of cultural backgrounds and experiences, including being a member of a historical Nova Scotian Community, such as African/Black Nova Scotian, Acadian and Gael/Gaelic
- iii. **Gender Diversity:** Includes non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender queer, trans-experience and other gender identities
- iv. **Ability Diversity:** Lived experience navigating a spectrum of physical, mental or cognitive abilities
- v. **Age Diversity**
- vi. **Practice Diversity** (Registrants): Includes practice experiences, backgrounds, specialties and locations

Committee Members – Chairs and Vice Chairs

In addition to the competencies required of committee members, every committee Chair and Vice Chair will demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:

- i. **Committee Leadership:** Understanding of and experience in facilitating meetings, developing a positive culture, conflict resolution, building consensus and fostering effective decision making
- ii. **(For adjudicative committee Chairs): Holding Hearings:** Knowledge and experience of participating in and/or chairing hearings within a legislative framework, including an understanding of the principles of administrative law and procedural fairness
- iii. **(For adjudicative committee Chairs): Decision Writing:** knowledge and experience in writing defensible decisions

Every committee Chair and Vice Chair will either demonstrate, or be willing to learn, the following knowledge and skills:

- i. **Trauma and Culturally Sensitive Decision-Making:** Understanding and sensitivity to the effects of stress or potential stress on individuals involved in regulatory processes and ability to create safe spaces and trust-building processes that are also culturally sensitive.